

The framework document should be read **alongside** the evaluation schedule for the inspection of adoption agencies.

Note: This guide seeks to identify the key points in the sixteen-page source document produced by Ofsted. It uses the language of the original document. Numbers refer to paragraphs in the source document.

Legal basis for inspection

10. When inspecting adoption agencies, Ofsted gives consideration to the relevant regulations and:
- the Care Standards Act 2000
 - the Adoption and Children Act 2002
 - Adoption: national minimum standards⁵
 - Adoption statutory guidance: the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

Frequency of inspection

11. All adoption agencies must have at least one inspection in each three-year inspection cycle.
12. The timing of any inspection is influenced by an assessment of:
- the outcomes of previous inspections
 - any current complaints or enforcement action
 - notifications received from a voluntary adoption agency
 - other relevant information received by Ofsted.
13. Where we judge an adoption agency as inadequate, we normally re-inspect it within 12 months.

Types of inspection

14. The following types of inspection are carried out
- An **inspection** is carried out at least once in each three-year cycle
- A **monitoring inspection** may be carried out if there is an incident, complaint or concern regarding a registered agency.
- A **survey inspection** may be carried out to gather evidence on a particular theme, issue or aspect of best practice.

Notice given for inspection

15. Inspections will be conducted with 10 working days' notice.

Evaluation schedule

17. The evaluation schedule is set out in a separate document.
18. Inspectors make judgements on:
- overall effectiveness
 - outcomes for children and young people
 - quality of service provision
 - safeguarding children and young people
 - leadership and management.

Grading inspection findings

28. Inspectors make judgements against the evaluation schedule using a four-point scale.

Outstanding: an agency of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good; an agency of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate: an agency that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: an agency that does not meet minimum requirements

The approach following an overall judgement of inadequate

31. Where a voluntary adoption agency is judged inadequate, the inspector sets requirements to achieve compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and relevant adoption regulations. The registered person/s must meet these requirements as set out in regulation.
32. Where a local authority adoption agency is judged inadequate, inspectors make recommendations, clearly identifying the regulatory failures under the Care Standards Act 2000, the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and relevant adoption regulations.
33. On making a judgement of inadequate for a voluntary adoption agency, the inspector must consult with the Compliance, Investigation and Enforcement team, and must instigate a case review where:
- there is evidence of any immediate risk to children and/or young people, breach of regulations that constitutes an offence, or breach of any conditions placed on the registration
 - the last inspection resulted in a judgement of inadequate for overall effectiveness.
34. The inspector should also consider consulting with the Compliance, Investigation and Enforcement team where there is any history of:
- complaints against the voluntary adoption agency that have not been dealt with in a satisfactory way
 - failures to comply with regulations and/or national minimum standards

that have not been dealt with in a satisfactory way

- failures to take satisfactory action to meet requirements/actions and recommendations that call into question the suitability of the registered person.
36. In all instances of provision judged to be inadequate for overall effectiveness, the next inspection will normally take place within 12 months. It takes place sooner if any further significant concerns arise during this period or if earlier inspection is necessary to meet statutory requirements.

Reporting findings at inspections

37. Each inspection is followed by a report that sets out the inspection findings using text and grades:

Agency information: Brief contextual information about the agency, including numbers of children placed and adopters approved

Overall effectiveness: Grade

Areas for improvement: No grade

Outcomes for children and young people: Grade

Quality of service provision: Grade

Safeguarding children and young people: Grade

Leadership and management: Grade

About this inspection: Information about the legal basis for the Inspection.

38. The draft full inspection report is sent to the provider for a factual accuracy check within 10 working days of the end of the inspection. The registered provider or representatives should return the draft full inspection report with any comments on factual accuracy within five working days. The final report is published on the Ofsted website within 20 working days of the end of the inspection (irrespective of appeals or complaints).

Inspection activity

40. In preparation for inspection, inspectors consider the information that Ofsted has about the service. This includes:
- the annual online questionnaires
 - previous inspection reports, including, for local authorities, any inspection of the authority's services for looked after children
 - the statement of purpose and, where appropriate, the children's guide
 - concerns and complaints received
 - notifications of significant events received
 - any changes to registration, including change of manager
 - any current or recent enforcement activity
 - any self-assessment and dataset submitted
 - adoption data
 - panel minutes.
41. Inspection activities, where possible, include:
- gathering views from children and young people, where appropriate
 - gathering the views of birth relatives
 - discussion with adult adoptees
 - discussion with adopters and prospective adopters
 - discussion with staff and managers
 - discussion with the chair of the adoption panel or other members of the panel if the chair is not available
 - discussions with foster carers who provide pre-adoption placements
 - gathering views from partners and stakeholders
 - case file reading and case tracking
 - examination of records.

User and partner views and questionnaires

44. In this context, users are the children and young people who are placed for adoption by the adoption agency, people who enquire about and or apply to adopt, prospective adopters, and adoptees, their birth parents, relatives or carers.
45. In this context, partners include other adoption agencies providing or purchasing placements to or from the agency being inspected, adoption support agencies, and health services.

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